



SERVICE OF THE CONSECRATION OF A CHURCH

What is salvation for an Orthodox Christian? For an Orthodox Christian salvation is union with Christ. This union with Christ is called the "Life in Christ". The center of this "Life in Christ" is the Holy Altar, as well as the services which are related to it, i.e. the Seven Sacraments. Because the Holy Altar is so important in the life of an Orthodox Christian, the service of Consecration centers around the Holy Altar Table. In simple terms the Consecration Service is the Baptism and Chrismation of the Church.

Before the Consecration Service begins, all Articles on the Altar Table are removed, and the Altar is left uncovered with nothing on it. When the Bishop enters the Church he will bring with him the relics of three Saints. These relics will be placed on a Paten (Diskarion), which will remain on the Altar Table overnight, together with a Vigil Light.

INTRODUCTORY SERVICES AND VESPERS

The Consecration of the Church begins on the Eve of the celebration with a short Prayer Service honoring the memory of Martyrs. The Vespers, a very joyous celebration follows, and many Priests participate in it to share in the joy of the coming event.

On Sunday Morning the order of services is: Matins (Morning Prayer), the Consecration Service and the first Divine Liturgy in the newly consecrated Church.

MATINS (Orthros)

The Matins is a morning service held prior to the Divine Liturgy. It begins with the reading of the six Psalms (3, 37, 62, 87, 102, 142) and ends with the Great Doxology. During Matins resurrection and consecration hymns are sung. The Priest will also celebrate part of the Proskomidi Service (preparing the Gifts which will be used during the Divine Liturgy). At the appointed time the Bishop will enter the Church and will put on his vestments (Ceremonial Robes). At the end of Matins the Bishop will begin the Service of Consecration.

THE CONSECRATION SERVICE

What exactly takes place during the Consecration? The Consecration is a

special service which "changes" an ordinary building into the House of God. This change takes place through the Grace of God and the Holy Spirit. Many symbolic actions take place such as:

1. The Three Processions around the Church Building.
2. The Placing of, and Sealing of, the Holy Relics in the Altar Table.
3. The Washing and Anointing of the Altar Table.
4. The Placing of the new Altar Coverings and other Holy Articles on the Holy Table.
5. The Lighting of the Vigil Light.

THE SERVICE OF CONSECRATION

THE BISHOP: Blessed is our God always, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen

READER: Psalm 143 ; Hear, O Lord, my prayer give ear to my supplication; in Thy faithfulness answer me and in Thy righteousness. And enter not into judgment with Thy servant; for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified. For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead. Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate. I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Thy works; I muse on the work of Thy hands. I stretch forth my hands unto Thee; my soul thirsteth after Thee as a thirsty land. Hear me speedily, O Lord: my spirit faileth; hide not Thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. Cause me to hear Thy loving-kindness in the morning; for in Thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto Thee. Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies: I flee unto Thee to hide me. Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God; Thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness. Quicken me, O Lord, for Thy name's sake; for Thy righteousness sake bring my soul out of trouble. And of Thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul; for I am Thy servant.

***DEACON:** Again and again in peace let us pray to the Lord.

**When the Deacon is not present, the Priest recites his petitions.*

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

DEACON: Help us, save us, have mercy upon us and protect us, O God, by Thy Grace.

Commemorating our most holy, pure, blessed, and glorified Lady, Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary, with all the Saints, let us commend ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.

CHOIR: To You O Lord.

THE BISHOP: For holy art Thou our God, and unto Thee we ascribe glory, to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

DEACON: Let us pray to the Lord.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

Bishop standing before the Holy Relics reads the prayer:

THE BISHOP: O Lord our God, faithful in Thy words and truthful in Thy promises Who hast granted Thy holy Martyrs to fight the good fight and to fulfill the course of godliness and to keep the faith of true confession: Be Thou, the same all-holy Lord, entreated of their prayers and grant unto us Thine unworthy servants, to have a part and inheritance with them, that being followers of them, we also may obtain the good things which await them.

Through Thy mercy and love toward mankind of Thine Only; begotten Son with Whom Thou art blessed, together with Thine all; holy, good and life-giving spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

THE BISHOP: Peace be with you all.

CHOIR: And with thy spirit.

DEACON: Let us bow our heads unto the Lord.

CHOIR: To Thee, O Lord.

THE BISHOP: O Lord our God, through the intercessions of our Holy Lady and Mother of God and of all Thy saints direct the works of our hands, Thine unworthy servants, and make us worthy that we may in all things prove to be acceptable unto Thy goodness.

Blessed and glorified be the majesty of Thy Kingdom, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

PROCESSIONS AROUND THE CHURCH

Following this prayer, the Bishop and Clergy together with all the Faithful prepare for the Three Processions around the Church. The Three Processions represent the setting aside of an area which will be separate and sacred from all other areas.

The Bishop raises the covered Paten on which the Holy Relics were placed, and prepares to leave the Church. The procession is led by the Altar Boys, followed by the Choir and Cantors, the Priests, the Bishop carrying the Relics, and the Faithful, leaving the Church empty. As the procession leaves the Church the Choir or Cantor sings:

HYMNS

O Holy Martyrs, who fought the good fight and have received your crowns, entreat the Lord to save our souls.

Glory to Thee, O Christ God, the Apostles' pride, the Martyrs, joy, who have preached the consubstantial Trinity.

During the processions around the Church special consecration hymns are sung, or the Hymn "Holy God, Holy and Mighty..."

Tone 1

Be renewed, be renewed, O New Jerusalem, because your light has shown, and the glory of the Lord has come upon you. This house has been founded by the Father, this house has been made firm by the Son, this house has been renewed by, the Holy Spirit, which illumines and supports, and hallows our souls.

In early times, while the temple was consecrated, Solomon offered to the Lord sacrifices of animals and holocausts. When you were pleased in us O Saviour, to forgo the formalities and let the truth be known, the whole world offers to You the bloodless sacrifices to Your glory, because You are the Lord of all things and make everything holy through Your Holy Spirit.

Tone Pl. 2

The Consecration is an old honored custom, and a good one. It is however proper to honor new churches through the consecration as an island dedicated to God. As Isaiah says: we have acquired these sites from the

congregation of the gentiles, and established them as churches on the solid foundation of God's Name. This is why we are celebrating this Consecration in a spiritual manner.

When the procession reaches the front of the Church, the Bishop places the Holy Relics on table, which has been previously placed there, and readings from the Bible follow. A section of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews 2:11-18, and St. Matthew 16:13-20 is read.

SCRIPTURAL READINGS

DEACON: Let us attend.

READER: The Lord is my light and my salvation. The Lord is the protection of my life.

DEACON: Wisdom.

READER: The Reading is from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews (2:11-18).

DEACON: Let us attend.

READER: For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will proclaim Thy name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will praise Thee. And again, I will put my trust in Him. And again. Here am I, and the children God has given me. Since, therefore, the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the power of death, that is, the devil and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage. For surely it is not with angels that He is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore He had to be made like His brethren in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because He Himself has suffered and been tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted.

THE BISHOP: Peace be with you, Reader.

CHOIR: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

DEACON: Wisdom. Attend, Let us hear the Holy Gospel.

THE BISHOP: Peace be with you all.

CHOIR: And with your spirit.

THE BISHOP: The reading is from the Holy Gospel of St. Matthew (16:13-20).

DEACON: Let us attend.

CHOIR: Glory to Thee, o Lord, glory to Thee.

THE BISHOP: Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples. "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" And they said. "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them. "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father Who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on the rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

CHOIR: Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee.

Once again, the Bishop picks up the Paten, and the second procession around the Church takes place, while the Choir sings Special Hymns, or "Holy God, Holy mighty..."

When the procession reaches the front doors of the Church, the Relics are again placed on the table, and readings from the Bible follow.

SCRIPTURAL READINGS

DEACON: Let us attend.

READER: She shall be brought unto the King; the virgins that follow her shall be brought unto Thee.

DEACON: Wisdom.

READER: The Reading is from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews (9:1-7).

DEACON: Let us attend.

READER: Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary For a tent was prepared, the outer one, in which were the lamp stand and the table and the bread of the Presence; it is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain stood a tent called the Holy of Holies, having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, which contained a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded and the tables of the covenant above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. These preparations having thus been made, the priests go continually into the outer tent, performing their

ritual duties; but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people.

THE BISHOP: Peace be with you, Reader.

CHOIR: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

DEACON: Wisdom. Attend. Let us hear the Holy Gospel.

THE BISHOP: Peace be with you all.

CHOIR: And with thy spirit.

THE BISHOP: The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke (10:38-42).

DEACON: Let us attend.

THE BISHOP: Now as they went on their way Jesus entered a village; and a woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving and she went to him and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me. But the Lord answered her. Martha, Martha you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her.

CHOIR: Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee.

The Bishop picks up the Paten with the Holy Relics, and the final procession takes place. The Choir continues to sing Special Hymns or "Holy God, Holy mighty..."

At the end of the third procession the Bishop places the Paten on the table and recites a prayer.

THE BISHOP: Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

CHOIR: O Christ our God, Who didst build Thy Church upon the rock of faith, direct our petitions and receive Thy people who in faith cry unto Thee, save us, O our God.

DEACON: Let us pray to Lord.

The Bishop then offers a shorter prayer in which he asks God to protect His new House of Worship.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

THE BISHOP: Blessed be Thou forever, O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who through the veil of His flesh hath consecrated for us an entrance into the Church of the first-born, who are written in heaven, where is the abode of those who rejoice, and the voice of gladness; Do Thou the same Lord, Who lovest mankind, look upon us Thy sinful and unworthy servants who now celebrate the consecration of the honorable Church of the Holy Apostles after the pattern of Thy most holy Church, that is, of our own body, which Thou hast made worthy unto us by Thine all-laudable Apostle Paul to call Thy Church; and establish it immovable unto the end of time and glorified in Thee. And vouchsafe that without condemnation we may offer therein praises and exaltations unto Thy glory, and unto Thine Only; begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and Thy Holy Spirit with understanding, and with all emotion and that those who worship Thee in Thy fear may show themselves worthy of Thy divine bounties; and that these prayers offered up by us and by all Thy people unto thine ineffable loving kindness may be acceptable unto Thy goodness: Through the prayers of our most holy Lady, Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary.

For holy art Thou, O our God, Who resteth on the Saints. And unto Thee do we ascribe glory, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

DEACON: Let us pray to the Lord.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

THE BISHOP: O Master, Lord our God, Who hast appointed in heaven orders and armies of angels and archangels for the ministry of Thy Glory: Grant that there may be with our entrance, the entrance of Thy holy angels, ministering with us and glorifying with us Thy goodness.

For unto Thee are due all glory, honor and worship, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

THE DIALOGUE FROM PSALM 24 - ENTRY INTO CHURCH

The Bishop standing in front of the Doors of the Church, begins a short dialogue. The words of this conversation are taken from Psalm 24. This act represents Christ the King entering and taking over the Church building by defeating the power of the devil. The Bishop taps on the door with his staff and says:

THE BISHOP: Open, Open the gates and let them remain open forever

and let the King of glory enter.

The priest, who is the only one inside the Church and represents an Angel, is surprised to hear this command, and asks: Who is this King of Glory?

THE BISHOP: The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, the Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.

(This dialogue is repeated 3 times.)

Having said this, the Bishop raises the Paten and makes the sign of the Cross before the Church doors. The doors are then unlocked by the Godparent, and the Bishop enters the Church carrying the Holy Relics followed by all the clergy and the congregation. The faithful light candles, venerate the Holy Icons in the Narthex, and return to their seats. The psalti (chanter) in the meantime sings:

Forasmuch as Thou hast shown forth the splendor of the firmament on high and the beauty of the holy habitation of Thy glory here below, O Lord: Establish Thou the same forever, and accept our petitions continually offered unto Thee therein; Through the Theotokos, O Thou Who art the life and the Resurrection of all men.

THE DEPOSITION OF THE HOLY RELICS

The Bishop enters the Sanctuary, carrying the Paten with the Holy relics. Uncovering the Paten, he places the Holy Relics in a small gold box. He then pours Holy Chrism over the Relics; this act symbolizes the union between our Lord, and His Martyrs. Having done this the Bishop prays for the founders of the Church who have fallen asleep (died).

THE BISHOP: Eternal be the memory of the builders of this Holy Church.

CONGREGATION: Eternal be their memory.

In the early years of Christianity the Church was not allowed to exist; for many years the early Christians were persecuted and killed for their faith in Christ. In those days, the Christians met in underground burial places and celebrated the Eucharist on the graves of the martyred Saints. When the persecutions ended, and the Church was allowed to exist, the custom of celebrating the Eucharist over the graves of Martyrs continued by placing Holy Relics in the Altar at the time of the Consecration. In this manner, we are always reminded that the Church was built on the Blood of the Martyrs and their faith in the Lord.

Since the Consecration centers around the Holy Altar Table (for it represents the center of all Sacraments and services of the Church), the Bishop prays and asks for God's help to accomplish the service:

DEACON: Let us pray to the Lord.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

THE BISHOP: O Lord our God, Who hast bestowed upon the holy Martyrs which suffered for Thy sake this glory also, that their relics should be sown in all the earth, in Thy holy churches, and should bring forth fruits of healing: Do Thou, the Same Master, Who art the giver of all good things, through the intercession of the Saints whose relics Thou hast graciously permitted to be placed in this Thy venerable Altar, enable us without condemnation to offer unto Thee thereon the bloodless sacrifice: And grant us all those petitions which are unto salvation, vouchsafing also to the relics therein of those who have suffered for thy holy Name, that they may work miracles unto our salvation.

For Thine art the kingdom and the power and the glory, of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

There follows a shorter prayer in which the Bishop once again asks for God's Blessings and help:

DEACON: Let us pray to the Lord.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

THE BISHOP: O Lord, God our Saviour, Who createst all things and makest the race of man for salvation, accept the prayer of us, Thine unworthy servants; and enable us at this present hour without condemnation to accomplish the consecration of this Church, founded to Thy praise in the name of **(Church's Name)** and to consummate the building therein of an Altar.

For unto Thee are due all glory, honor and worship, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

Following these two prayers the Bishop places the gold box containing the Holy relics into a special cavity in the altar. In order to seal them permanently the Bishop pours wax/mastic over them. The wax/mastic contains many sweet smelling and fragrant spices, which were used by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus to anoint the Body of Christ in preparation for burial. The Holy Altar represents the Tomb in which our Lord's body was placed. All of this takes place during the reading of Psalm 145.

READER: Psalm 145; I will magnify Thee, O God, my King; and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Every day will I give thanks unto Thee: and praise Thy Name forever and ever. Great is the Lord and marvelous worthy to be praised; there is no end of his greatness. One generation shall praise Thy works unto another and declare Thy power. As for me I

will be talking of Thy worship, Thy glory, Thy praise, and wondrous works; so that men shall speak of the might of Thy marvelous acts; and I will also tell of Thy greatness. The memorial of Thine abundant kindness shall be showed and men shall sing of Thy righteousness. The Lord is gracious and merciful; longsuffering, and of great goodness. The Lord is loving unto every man; and His mercy is over all His works. All thy works praise Thee, O Lord; and Thy saints give thanks unto Thee. They show the glory of Thy Kingdom, and talk of Thy power, that Thy power, Thy glory, and mightiness of Thy Kingdom, might be known unto men. Thy kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all ages. The Lord upholdeth all such as fall, and lifteth up all those that are down. The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O Lord; and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thine hand, and fillest all things living with plenteousness. The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him; yea, all such as call upon Him faithfully. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him; He also will hear their cry, and will help them. The Lord preserveth all them that love Him; but scattereth abroad all the ungodly. My mouth shall speak the Praise of the Lord; and let all flesh give thanks unto Him holy Name forever and ever.

As the Bishop removes the excess wax/mastic, Psalm 23 is read. The Deposition (placing of the Holy Relics in the Altar Table) is now completed, and the Bishop prepares to wash and anoint the Altar Table.

Psalm 23; The Lord is my shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort. He shall convert my soul, and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness of His Name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me. Thou shalt prepare a table before me against them that trouble me; Thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full. But Thy loving kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

THE WASHING OF THE ALTAR TABLE

Since the Altar Table represents the Tomb of Christ and His body lies therein. The Altar must undergo its own "Baptism" (washing) and "Chrismation" (anointing). Before washing and anointing the Altar Table the Bishop puts on a white linen garment called the Savanon. While the faithful kneel, the Bishop reads the prayer of Consecration:

THE BISHOP: Blessed is our God always, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

DEACON: Again and again, bending on our knees, let us pray to the Lord.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

THE BISHOP: O God, without beginning and eternal, Who callest all things into being from nothingness; Who dwellest in light unapproachable, and hast the heavens for Thy throne, and the earth for Thy footstool; Who didst give a law and pattern unto Moses and didst inspire Bezaleel with the spirit of wisdom, and didst enable them to complete the perfect building of the Tabernacle of Thy Covenant, wherein ordinances of divine worship were instituted which were the images and types of the truth; Who didst bestow upon Solomon breadth and greatness of heart, and thereby didst rear of old the Church; and upon Thy holy and all; laudable Apostles didst renew the service in the Spirit, and the grace of the true Tabernacle, and through the same, O Lord of Hosts, didst plant thy Churches and Thine Altars in all the earth, that there might be offered unto Thee consecrated and bloodless sacrifices; Who, also, hast graciously been pleased to found this Church, in the Name of (Church's Name) to Thy glory, and to the glory of Thine Onlyâ begotten Son, and of Thine allâ holy Spirit: Do Thou, the same immortal and generous King, call to mind Thy bounties and Thy mercies, which are from everlasting, and abhor not us who are defiled with a multitude of sins, neither annual Thou Thy Covenant because of our uncleanness; but disregard Thou now our iniquities, and strengthen us with the Grace and inspiration of Thy life- giving and Holy Spirit, that without condemnation we may accomplish the renewal of this Church, and fulfill the consecration of the Altar therein; that therein blessing Thee in Psalms, and songs, and mystical rites we may always magnify Thy loving-kindness. Yea, O Master, Lord our God, the hope of all the ends of the earth, hear us sinners who make our supplications unto Thee, and send down Thine all-holy and worshipful, and almighty Spirit, and sanctify this Church and this Altar; Fill it with the light everlasting; elect it for Thy dwelling place; make it the abode of Thy glory. Adorn it with Thy divine and supernatural gifts. Appoint it for a haven of the tempest tossed, for a healing of passions, for a refuge of the weak, for an expelling of evil spirits. Let Thine eyes be open upon it day and night and let Thine ears be heedful of the prayer of those who shall enter therein in Thy fear, and in devoutness, and shall call upon Thine all honorable and worshipful Name; that whatsoever they shall ask of Thee, Thou wilt hear it in heaven above and wilt show mercy and be gracious unto them. Preserve it indestructible even unto the end of the ages, and show forth the holy Altar therein, an Altar of Thy Holy Things through the power and indwelling of Thy Holy Spirit, Glorify it above the Mercy Seat according to the Law; that the holy offices which shall be celebrated thereon may attain unto Thy holy, and most heavenly and super-sensual Altar and obtain for us the grace of Thy most pure overshadowing; for we trust not in the service of our unworthy hands, but in Thine unspeakable goodness.

The Deacon then offers petitions for the peace of the world, for the Church and city in which it is located, for the Consecrating Bishop, and for the Holy Altar Table.

DEACON: Help us, save us, have mercy on us, raise and protect us, O God by Thy Grace.

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

DEACON: For the peace from above, and the salvation of our souls let us pray to the Lord.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

DEACON: For this Holy House and for those that enter it with faith, reverence and fear of God, let us pray to the Lord.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

DEACON: For our (Consecrating Bishop) the honorable Priesthood, the Diaconate in Christ and for all clergy and laity, let us pray to the Lord.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

DEACON: For the work of our hands and our assembled brethren, let us pray to the Lord.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

DEACON: For the sanctification of this Holy House and the Altar therein through the descent, might and works of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

DEACON: For this City and every city and land and for the faithful who dwell in them, let us pray to the Lord.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

DEACON: For those who travel by land, sea and air, for the sick, the suffering and captives and for their salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

DEACON: Help us, save, have mercy on us, O God, by Thy Grace.

Commemorating our most holy, pure, blessed and glorified Lady, Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, with all the Saints, let us commend ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.

CHOIR: To Thee, O Lord.

THE BISHOP: For holy art Thou, O our God, Who restest among the Saints and the Martyrs who suffered for Thee, and to Thee we ascribe glory, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

A basin of water is brought to the Bishop who blesses and prays for its sanctification.

DEACON: Let us pray to the Lord.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

THE BISHOP: O Lord our God, Who sanctified the streams of Jordan by Thy saving manifestation. Do Thou, the same Lord, Send down also now the Grace of the all; Holy Spirit on this Thy present Altar and bless us and this water unto sanctification and completion of Thy Holy Altar.

For blessed art Thou unto the ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

THE BISHOP: In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

The Bishop then pours water on the Altar three times saying: "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit", and washes the Altar Table while Psalm 84 is read. This act symbolizes Baptism: The Altar is cleaned by washing, and sanctified (made Holy) by the Grace of the Holy Spirit. After washing, the Altar is then dried.

READER: Psalm 84 - O how amiable are Thy dwellings, Thou Lord of Hosts! My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found her a house, and the swallow a nest, where she may lay her young; even Thy altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house they will be always praising Thee. Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are Thy ways. Who going through the valley of misery use it for a well; and the pools are filled with water. They will go from strength to strength, and unto the God of gods appeareth every one of them in Zion. O Lord God of Hosts, hear my prayer; hearken, O God of Jacob. Behold, O God our defender, and look upon the face of Thine Anointed. For one day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness. For the Lord God is a light and defense; the Lord will give grace and worship; and no good thing shall He withhold from them that live a godly life. O Lord God of Hosts blessed is the man that putteth his trust in Thee.

THE BISHOP: Glory to our God unto the ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

ANOINTING OF THE ALTAR TABLE

The Bishop sprinkles Rosewater on the Altar Table as he recites:

THE BISHOP: Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be clean: Thou shalt wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.

Rosewater is a sweet smelling fragrance which was used to anoint the Body of Christ for burial. The Bishop continues the rest of Psalm 51 while the Altar Table is wiped dry by the he assisting Priests. The Priests use Antimens to do this.

Turn thy face from my sins, and put out all my misdeeds. Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not Thy holy Spirit from me. O give me the comfort of Thy help again and establish me with Thy free Spirit. Then shall I teach Thy ways unto the wicked, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, Thou that art the God of my health; and my tongue shall sing of Thy righteousness. Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall show Thy praise. For Thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I give it Thee; but Thou delightest not in burnt offerings. The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt Thou not despise. O be favourable and gracious unto Zion, build Thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifice of righteousness, with the burnt offerings and oblations; then shall they offer young bullocks upon Thine altar.

Blessed is our God always, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

DEACON: Let us attend.

THE BISHOP: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

The Bishop anoints the Holy Altar with Holy Chrism (once in the center and then on either side) while he sings: "Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia". He spreads the Holy Chrism over the entire Altar Table as he recites a section from Psalm 133:

THE BISHOP: Psalm 133 ; Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down unto the beard, even unto Aaron's beard and went down to the skirts of his clothing. Like as the dew of Hermon, which fell upon the hill of Zion. For there the Lord promised his blessing, and life forever; more.

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

THE BISHOP: Glory to Thee, O Holy Trinity our God, glory to Thee, unto the ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

The Priests then wipe the excess Chrism with the Antimens.

St. Symeon, in writing about the anointing of the Altar Table, says the following: "Since the Altar is anointed with the Holy Chrism, which represents the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Altar Table then becomes a source of Grace to all people through the Sacraments which are celebrated thereon. The Holy Gospel is placed on the Altar, the Holy Relics are within, so we see that the Altar becomes the Altar of Christ, a throne of Glory, the dwelling place of God, and the Tomb of Christ."

Next, icons of the four Evangelists are fastened to the Altar (one in each corner). The completed Altar represents the entire Church, which from the four corners of the world is held together by the Lord, and is built on Him through the preaching of the Gospel. Following the Anointing, the Bishop begins the vesting (putting on the new coverings) of the Altar Table.

THE VESTING OF THE ALTAR TABLE

The Altar Table is now covered with the "Katasarkion". This white linen cloth represents the Lord's burial shroud. The Katasarkion is tied with a cord which represents the cord with which our Lord's hands were tied as He stood before the High Priests. The Katasarkion will never be removed and will remain on the Altar for as long as the Church remains standing. As the Katasarkion is being placed on the Altar, Psalm 132 is read by the psalti:

READER: Psalm 132 ; Lord, remember David, and all his trouble: how he swore unto the Lord, and vowed a vow unto the Almighty God of Jacob; I will not come within the tabernacle of mine house, nor climb up into my bed; I will not suffer mine eyes to sleep, nor mine eyelids to slumber; neither the temples of my head to take any rest; until I find out a place for the temple of the Lord; an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. Lo, we heard of the same at Ephrata, and found it in the wood. We will go into His tabernacle, and fall low on our knees before His footstool. Arise, O Lord, into Thy resting; place; Thou and the ark of Thy strength. Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let Thy saints sing with joyfulness. For Thy servant David's sake turn not away the presence of Thine Anointed. The Lord hath made a faithful oath unto David, and He shall not shrink from it; of the fruit of thy body shall I set upon thy seat. If thy children will keep My covenant, and My testimonies that I shall teach them; their children also shall sit upon thy seat forever more. For the Lord hath chosen Zion to be an habitation for Himself; He hath longed for her. This shall be my rest forever; here will I dwell, for I have a delight

therein. I will bless her provisions with abundance, and satisfy her poor with bread. I will deck her priests with health, and her saints shall rejoice and sing. There shall I make the horn of David to flourish:

I have ordained a lantern for mine Anointed. As for his enemies, I shall clothe them with shame; but upon himself shall his crown flourish.

THE BISHOP: Glory to our God unto the ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

Having placed the Katasarkion over the Altar, the Bishop says: "Glory to You our God unto Ages of ages. He washes his hands, and covers the Altar Table with a brighter and more elaborate cover which symbolizes the Glory of God. While he covers the Altar Table, the reader reads Psalm 93:

READER: Psalm 93; The Lord is King, and hath put on glorious apparel; the Lord hath put on His apparel, and girded Himself with strength. He hath made the round world so sure, that it cannot be moved. Ever since the world began hath Thy seat been prepared; Thou art from everlasting. The floods are risen, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The waves of the sea are mighty, and rage horribly; but yet the Lord, who dwelleth on high, is mightier. Thy testimonies, O Lord, are very sure; holiness becometh Thine house forever.

THE BISHOP: Glory to Thee, Holy Trinity, our God, glory to Thee unto the ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

The Bishop proceeds to place the other Holy Articles on the Altar Table. First he places the Antimens; on top of this is placed the Gospel Book (representing the teachings of Christ.) The Artoforion, in which the Body and Blood of our Lord is placed, and is reserved for Communion of the sick. The Artoforion is symbolic of the presence of our Lord. The candlesticks which are placed last represent the Light of Christ that shines forth during the Sacred Services.

Since the Altar has been Consecrated, sanctified and adorned with all its furnishings, the Altar and the entire Church is now censed with incense while Psalm 26 is read:

READER: Psalm 26 Be thou my Judge, O Lord, for I have walked innocently; my trust hath been also in the Lord, therefore shall I not fall. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try out my reins and my heart. For Thy loving-kindness is ever before mine eyes; and I will walk in Thy truth. I have not sat with vain persons; neither will I have fellowship with the deceitful. I have hated the congregation of the wicked; and will not sit among the ungodly. I will wash my hands in innocence, O Lord: and so will I go to Thine altar; that I may show the voice of thanksgiving; and tell of all Thy wondrous works. Lord I have loved the habitation of Thy house,

and the place where Thine honour dwelleth. O Shut not up my soul with the sinners nor my life with the bloodthirsty; in whose hands is wickedness, and their right hand is full of gifts. But, as for me, I will walk innocently: O deliver me, and be merciful unto me. My foot standeth right: I will praise the Lord in the churches.

ANOINTING OF THE CHURCH

The Bishop then anoints the four walls of the Church and the Holy Icons making the sign of the Cross on them with Holy Chrism. This act symbolizes the sanctification of all creation with the Grace of Christ.

THE BISHOP: Glory to the Holy and Almighty and life-giving Trinity, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

DEACON: Again and again in peace, let us pray to the Lord.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

DEACON: Help us, save, have mercy on us and protect us, O God, by Thy Grace.

Commemorating our most holy, pure, blessed and glorified Lady, Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary, with all the Saints, let us commend ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.

CHOIR: To Thee, O Lord.

THE BISHOP: For to Thee belong all glory, honor and worship, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

PRAYERS FOR THE CHURCH AND THE ALTAR TABLE

Upon completion of the Anointing, the Bishop offers prayers for the Altar and the Church:

DEACON: Let us pray to the Lord.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

THE BISHOP: O Lord of heaven and earth, Who with wisdom ineffable hast founded Thy holy Church and hast appointed the Order of the Priesthood upon the earth for an antitype of the Angels' service in heaven.

Do Thou. O munificent Lord, receive also us who now make our petitions unto Thee; not as being worthy to ask such great things of Thee, but that the exceeding excellence of Thy goodness may be manifested; for Thou hast not ceased in manifold benefits to be gracious unto mankind. And, as the chiefest of Thy benefits, Thou hast bestowed upon us the coming in the flesh of Thine Only begotten Son, Who was seen upon earth, and shedding forth the light of salvation upon them that sat in darkness, did offer Himself a sacrifice for us, and became a propitiation for the whole world, making us to be partakers of His Resurrection; and after that He had ascended into heaven . He endured His Apostles and Disciples, as He had promised, with from on high, which is the Holy Spirit, adored power and almighty, who proceedeth from Thee, our God and Father; through Whom, also, they became mighty in deed and in word, administered Baptism unto the adoption of sonship, built Churches, established Altars, and instituted the laws and precepts of the Priesthood. And we sinners, having preserved the tradition thereof, do fall down before Thee, the everlasting and compassionate God, and implore Thee: Fill with Thy glory divine this Church erected to Thy praise, and show Thou forth the holy Altar therein set up as the Holy of Holies: that we who stand before it, as before the dread Throne of Thy kingdom, may serve Thee uncondemned, sending up unto Thee petitions for ourselves and for all the people, and offering the bloodless sacrifice to Thy goodness, unto the remission of sins both voluntary and involuntary, unto the governing of our life, the attainment of a good life and the fulfilling of all righteousness.

For blessed be Thine all- holy Name of the Father, and Of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

THE BISHOP: Peace be with you all.

CHOIR: And with thy spirit.

DEACON: Let us bow our heads to the Lord.

CHOIR: To Thee, O Lord.

The Bishop blesses the faithful and offers another prayer for the Altar Table. He asks God to fill this Altar with His Grace so that the Bloodless Sacrifice may be offered upon it:

BISHOP: We thank Thee, O Lord our God, for that Thou hast graciously vouchsafed to continue also even unto us sinners and Thine unworthy servants, because of Thy great love toward mankind, that grace which Thou hast poured out upon Thy holy Apostles and upon our holy Fathers. Wherefore we pray Thee, O All merciful Lord: Fill with glory, and holiness, and Grace this Altar, that the bloodless sacrifices which shall thereon be offered unto Thee may be transformed into the most pure Body and precious Blood of Thine Only begotten Son, Who is our Lord, and God, and Saviour Jesus Christ, unto the salvation of all Thy people, and of our unworthiness.

For Thou art our God and to Thee we ascribe glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

SCRIPTURAL READINGS

The Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews (Chapter 3:1â 4) is read, as well as a selection from the Gospel of St. John (Chapter 10:22â 30).

DEACON: Let us attend.

READER: Holiness befits Thy house, O Lord. The Lord reigneth, He is clothed with majesty.

DEACON: Wisdom.

READER: The Reading is from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews (3:1â 4).

DEACON: Let us attend.

READER: Therefore holy brethren, who share in a heavenly call, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession. He was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in God's house. Yet Jesus has been counted worthy of as much more glory than Moses as the builder of a house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by some one but the builder of all things is God.

THE BISHOP: Peace be with you Reader.

CHOIR: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

PRIEST: Wisdom. Attend. Let us hear the Holy Gospel.

THE BISHOP: Peace be with you all.

CHOIR: And with Thy Spirit.

PRIEST: The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to St. John (10:22-30). Let us attend.

CHOIR: Glory to Thee O Lord glory to Thee.

THE BISHOP: It was the feast of the Dedication at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around Him and said to Him: "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my

Father's name, they bear witness to me: but you do not believe because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give them eternal life and they shall never perish and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

CHOIR: Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee.

LIGHTING OF THE VIGIL LIGHT

During the service the Bishop invites the faithful to come forward and to offer a few drops of oil in a Vigil Light. This they do as an offering to the Church. The Bishop will later light the Vigil Light and will place it on the Altar Table near the Artoforion. This light will be kept burning at all times and is symbolic of the never failing light of Christ which came into darkness of the world to be a light to enlighten all people.

The Bishop then removes the Savanon. The Savanon will be cut up into small pieces and each person in Church will receive a piece of it to keep as a "Phylacton" (a blessed object worn to help ward off evil).

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

The Saint of the Church being consecrated.

Now, and, ever...

Lord, benevolent and all powerful, as we celebrate this memorable occasion of the Consecration, we glorify You, the Giver of this Blessing, praying that You bless the spiritual understanding of our souls through the intercession of the glorious Champions of the Faith.

CONCLUDING PRAYERS

READER: Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy on us (thrice). Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

All Holy Trinity have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us from our sins. Master, pardon our iniquities. Holy One visit and heal our infirmities for Thy Name's sake. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

CONGREGATION:

Our Father, Who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name; Thy Kingdom

come; Thy will be done on earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those Who trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil.

THE BISHOP: For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power and the glory, of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

Glory ... Dismissal Hymn of the Church

Now, and ever, ... Repeat:

O Lord, establish this church forever as you have shown by the harmony of the heavens above and the beauty of the Holy Tabernacle of your Glory below. Accept our prayers which are continuously addressed to You in this church. Through the mediation of the Virgin Mary (Theotokos) who is the life and resurrection of all.

CHOIR: Amen.

DEACON: Have mercy upon us, O God, according to Thy great mercy, we pray Thee, hear us and have mercy.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy (thrice).

DEACON: Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, visitation, forgiveness and remission of sins of the servants of God, the Builders of this Holy House (Holy Apostles) and for the forgiveness of all their transgressions, both voluntary and involuntary.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy (thrice).

THE BISHOP: For Thou art a merciful God and lovest mankind and to Thee we ascribe glory, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

DISMISSAL

THE BISHOP: Glory to Thee, O God our hope, glory to Thee.

May Christ our true God, Who rose from the dead, through the intercessions of His allâ pure and Holy Mother, through the power of the precious and life giving Cross, through the protection of the honorable spiritual Powers of heaven, through the prayers of the honorable and glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John, the holy, glorious and victorious Martyrs, of our saintly and Godâ inspired Fathers, of the holy and righteous Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna and of all the Saints,

have mercy on us and save us, for our merciful God is good and loveth mankind.

Through the prayers of our holy Fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us.

PRIEST: Through the prayers of our Holy Bishop, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us.

CHOIR: Amen.

The Church has now been Baptized, Chrismated, Sanctified, Consecrated, and dedicated to God for eternal use as an Orthodox Christian House of Worship. The first Divine Liturgy is then celebrated in the newly consecrated "House of the Lord."

GLOSSARY

ANGEL: Pure spirits created by God, to serve and praise Him.

ALTAR: A term used to designate the Sanctuary, the area behind the Iconscreen.

ALTAR TABLE: The table on which the Holy Liturgy is celebrated. On it are found the Gospel Book, Cross, Antimens (Antimension), and the Artoforion. The Altar Table contains relics of the Saints which are placed within it at the time of the Church's Consecration.

ALTAR CLOTHS: A bright and usually elaborate cloth placed over the Altar Table. It is symbolic of the Glory of God since the Altar represents the Throne of God.

ANOINTING: The act of tracing a mark in the form of cross, with Holy Oil on a person or a thing in a Church ceremony.

ANTIMENS: (Antimension) The word means "in place of a table". The Antimens is a piece of cloth on which Christ's Burial is depicted and into which Relics are sewn. The Divine Liturgy is always celebrated on the Antimens.

ARTOFORION: A receptacle on the Altar Table, in which the Holy Sacraments are placed before conveyance to the sick.

BENEDICTION: The blessing offered by the Bishop or Priest at certain times in the services of the Church.

People: A layman who sings the responses at services.

CELEBRANT: Person who celebrates the Holy Eucharist (bishop or priest).

CENSER: The vessel in which incense is burned.

People: Persons who sing the responses at the Divine Liturgy and other services.

HOLY CHRISM: Holy Oil which contains many fragrant ingredients. It is mixed and blessed by our Patriarch, together with a group of bishops, on Holy Thursday and distributed to all churches in his care.

CORPORAL: (Eliton) A cloth similar to the Antimens, but without relics sewn inside. The Corporal may not be used as an Altar Table.

EPISTLE: A portion of the New Testament Scriptures read before the Gospel reading.

DEPOSITION: The Act of placing the Holy Relics into the Holy Altar Table during the Consecration of the Church.

EVANGELISTS: "The bringers of good tidings". The four writers of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

EUCCHARIST: Is another name for the Divine Liturgy. The Sacrament at which bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. The word Eucharist means "thanksgiving".

GOSPEL: The "Good News", a record of the life and teachings of Jesus. The Book of the Gospels is placed on the Holy Altar Table and is usually ornate, with a gold or silver cover.

ICON: Holy pictures representing holy persons and or an event in the life of Christ. Icons are found not only in the Church, but believers place them in their homes. An Orthodox has an attitude of reverence and respect for all icons.

ICONSTASION: Icon screen, the wall which separates the Sanctuary from the Nave of the Church building. On it are found the Icons of the Saviour, the Virgin Mary, St. John the Baptist, and the Patron Saint of the Church.

KATASARKION: A white linen cloth which covers the Altar Table. It is symbolic of the shroud in which our Lord's body was wrapped for burial.

MARTYR: Is a person who suffered and died for the Christian faith.

MASTIC: A yellowish resin used in making incense. The mastic is mixed with wax, myrrh, aloe, incense and labdanum. This mixture is used to seal the Holy Relics in the Altar Table.

MATINS: The morning service which is held prior to the Divine Liturgy. It begins with the reading of the Six Psalms and ends with the Great Doxology.

MYRRH: Is another name for the Holy Chrism.

ORTHROS: The morning service usually called Matins.

PATEN: A round, flat plate of gold or silver on which parts of the Prosforo (bread) which are to be consecrated are placed for the celebration of Liturgy.

PATRON SAINT: A Saint chosen by a Church, a nation, or any religious organization as a special guardian and protector.

RELICS: The bodies of Saints, or particles of their bodies, which the Church venerates because of their holiness. Relics of three Saints are placed in the Altar at the time of the Consecration.

SAVANON: A white linen garment worn by the celebrant Bishop at a Consecration. The Savanon is put on prior to the washing of the Altar Table. Following the Consecration, the Savanon is cut into small pieces and given to the people as a "Phylacton" (a blessed object worn as a protection against evil).

VENERATION: The honor and reverence that Orthodox pay to the Saints, the Virgin Mary and to icons.

VESPERS: The evening service begins with the reading of Psalm 104. On special feastdays, the Artoklasia is held during the Vespers Service.

VIGIL LIGHT: A light or lights burning in a glass holder. Usually found before Icons or in front of or on either side of the Artoforion.